

Governor's Remarks:

Holcomb selects Christopher Goff to join Indiana Supreme Court

June 12, 2017

Today, I have the incredible privilege and honor of introducing the person selected to fill the vacancy left by Justice Rucker on the Indiana Supreme Court.

Justice Rucker leaves behind a remarkable legacy after 26 distinguished years on the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court. His retirement set into motion events that have led us to this very day.

Few decisions are as impactful as the appointment of a Supreme Court Justice, whose influence will be felt by so many for so many years to come. To select a member of our state's highest court is a great responsibility—and I duly note it is made on behalf of and with the people of Indiana most in mind.

I can say without reservation that all three of the finalists provided for my consideration by the Judicial Nominating Commission are all well-qualified to serve on our state's highest court. And, I have no doubt each would serve admirably. It is a testament to the deep well of talent we have in this state that my choice was not an obvious one at the outset.

For that, I want to commend the Judicial Nominating Commission (under the leadership of Chief Justice Rush) for its thoughtful work, resulting in three exceptional candidates from which I am pleased to introduce to you the next Associate Justice of the Indiana Supreme Court: Christopher Michael Goff.

Judge Goff's superb personal and professional qualities are evident to anyone who spends any time with him. He has a profound respect for the Constitution and the rights and principles embodied within it.

And, a key aspect of his judicial philosophy... is a firm belief in the concept of "judicial restraint." Judges should not only take great care to limit the use of their power to strike down laws—or to declare them unfair or unconstitutional—unless they clearly violate the Constitution. They should also avoid injecting their own personal views and philosophies into the law.

Judge Goff is deeply devoted to the cause of justice, and his sharp legal mind has been honed by years of practical experience. From my interaction with him, it is immediately apparent he shares the fundamental values of all Hoosiers in mind.

He is critical thinker—one who will adhere to the Constitution and rule of law. And, he is also a forward thinker—one dedicated to making our court system even better.

It was also essential to me that the person selected for this most important position...at the very top of our judiciary...have the ability to relate to “everyday Hoosiers.”

And what’s most impressive and appreciated. For those who know Chris Goff’s life story, he has extensive experience interacting with a wide variety of people under many different circumstances, which is why he is so well-rounded and grounded.

Judge Goff currently serves as judge of the Wabash Superior Court. He is from Wabash County, was raised there and returned there to raise his family.

After graduating high school, he attended Ball State University where he graduated summa cum laude. He then attended Indiana University Maurer School of Law in Bloomington, where he graduated in 1996.

He began his legal career in Huntington, Indiana, practicing law. He treated his clients as “people” not “problems.” From the time he took the bench in 2005, Judge Goff has always looked for ways he could improve his community through his role as judge.

For example, he too saw the devastating effects of drug abuse in his county and, although money and resources were scarce, he instituted a Drug Court and then a Family Drug Treatment Court to help address this problem.

Judge Goff’s devotion to his community, his compassion, and his leadership skills were all instrumental in bringing together mental health specialists, law enforcement, prosecutors, and others necessary to implement and sustain these problem-solving courts. That same devotion ensured the success of those courts, at minimal costs to taxpayers... and has been noticed around the state.

His talents and efforts will impact future generations—not only of judges and lawyers, but most importantly by the citizens he serves. It’s no surprise Judge Goff remained active in his community (outside the courtroom) in so many ways that it would take too long to recount.

They included serving on the Huntington County Police Merit Board and establishing the Huntington County Court Appointed Special Advocate or CASA program.

Now... it's time for a change of scenery!

Judge Goff will bring his own unique voice and experiences to our high Court. Among them are the recognition he received in college for being the most outstanding student of African-American history—and the fact he has a racially-diverse family.

Judge Goff also grew up in a working-class family and has spent most of his life living in a rural county, which will complement his colleagues on the bench with their own deep roots in other urban and suburban regions of our state.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Judge Goff will be a fierce defender of the law and the Constitution. He has a stellar legal mind, exceptional judgment as well as a generosity of heart that will make him an outstanding Justice.

Judge Goff, there is no question that Justice Rucker inspired those he served with and the people of Indiana. Now you will have your opportunity as the newest member of the Court to leave your own unique mark and to create your own contribution.

Congratulations... Your Honor! The floor is yours!